



NNLC students become senators for a day

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May 3 will go down as the day NNLC students took over the Senate Chambers at the Nevada State Legislature building! Instructors and students from the English Language Learner, Multicultural Adult Basic Skills, and GED Transition classes boarded a bus to Carson City to attend uLegislate, a simulation experience sponsored by the Secretary of the Senate. For many this was the first chance to visit the legislative building. By the end of the event, NNLC's students had a better understanding of what it is like to review a resolution or pass a legislative bill.

Before the field trip, students located their district representatives and instructors presented a brief overview about the Legislature. This was also the perfect opportunity to present some facts about the State of Nevada.

Upon arriving at the legislature building and after a briefing by Assistant Secretary of the Senate Sherry Rodriguez, the students and instructors proceeded to the senate chambers to take their seats, stepping into the various roles such as senator, presiding officer, and legislative staffer. Many

found it an honor to be able to sit at the actual Senator's desk. Hiep Tran commented, "I was so happy that I'm never going to forget it — I was a Senator for a few hours!"

The condensed legislative proceedings commenced when Acting Senate President and NNLC student Christopher Morales gaveled twice to indicate the opening of the uLegislate session. From there, Ms. Rodriguez walked the students and instructors through the formal meeting process and then on to the Senate Order of Business.

The scripted process gave the students firsthand knowledge of the legislative process. From resolutions to bills, they experienced it all. Cleverly chosen topics — such as a resolution to create a new state called "South Nevada" and the first reading of Senate Bill No. 1 that increased the school week to Monday through Saturday — enhanced the experience as the students learned about the procedures needed to pass or reject a bill.

The highlight of the day came when students debated the various bills. Most took the opportunity to comment about environmental issues, such as provisions related to certain retail plastic bags, or the extended school week.

Once back at NNLC, students discussed what they learned and wrote thank you letters to the Secretary of the Senate's staff. Socorro Aguilar noted, "I learned different things about how to pass a new law ... I also want to thank you for the advice to talk about politics to our children." Rosa Maria Rodriguez commented, "I think I'll never forget the day that I stood up and gave my comments to that important matter of the change in the length of the school week."

This truly was a unique experience and NNLC is hoping the Secretary of the Senate's office will continue this important educational opportunity!

Before I did not know what business was taking place in the Legislature. Now I have a better idea of what our Senators do for our communities. —Rosalina Medrano

Certifying students for jobs and college

In March, the Council for Advancement of Adult Literacy published “[Random Acts of Progress: Certification of Readiness for Jobs and Colleges](#).” The document summarizes information gleaned from the September 2011 Roundtable of 22 national and state adult education and workforce development leaders, findings from recent research reports, and several promising national and state programs. Reviewed in the Report are the three national systems presently in use:

1. **National Workforce Skills Certificate**, developed by the California-based Comprehensive Adult Student Assessment Systems and Learning Resources, Inc. and based on the established CASAS system.
2. **National Work Readiness Credential** developed by the National Work Readiness Council, a collaboration of businesses, unions, chambers of commerce, education and training professionals, state workforce investment boards from half a dozen states, and Junior Achievement Worldwide. NWRC has partnered with Steck-Vaughn for marketing this Credential, which is built on the functional context foundation developed by the 1994 Initiative Equipped for the Future (EFF). Las Vegas’ [Community Multicultural Center](#) is looking at this Credential.
3. **The National Career Readiness Certificate**, a product of ACT (the nonprofit American College Testing program). Based largely on the WorkKeys assessments, the system measures foundational workplace skills and grants Certificates at four levels (bronze, silver, gold, and platinum). ACT is currently working with the National Association of Manufacturers, the National Center for Construction Education and Research, and a few others to align its Certificate with the assessment and validation needs of those groups. The [Adult Literacy and Language Program](#) at CSN has implemented this Certificate; [Western Nevada College’s Program](#) and the [Northern Nevada Literacy Council](#) are considering it.

The report also describes features of certification programs from Arkansas, California, Georgia, and Ohio. Parts II and III discuss questions, issues, and barriers, such as: do employers really want and value certifications, how much is enough, lack of consistency in certification systems, proof of return-on-investment, etc.

The authors conclude, “At this stage, meetings about readiness certification are apt to raise more questions than they answer. That was certainly the case in this project. But our findings indicate that there is promise in the many certification systems and approaches we have, and that these activities are being carried out with determination, a sense of the future, and some important achievements.”

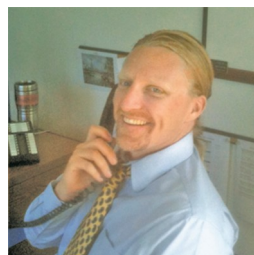
Download the full report from <http://www.caalusa.org/RandomActs.pdf>.

Certification for professionals: The National Association of Workforce Development Professionals ([NAWDP](#)) offers a competency-based Certified Workforce Development Professional (CWDP) credential. Download the brochure from <http://nvae.us/6a>.

Our goal is that all Nevada Adult Education students will, through partnerships at the state and local levels, have access to nationally recognizable, portable career readiness certification.

This certification can help Nevada adults obtain employment, retain their jobs, and move up the career ladder. It is imperative that everyone in our workforce, including those who currently have low literacy skills and lack a High School Diploma or its equivalent, have access to fast-track education and training certification programs that will lead to family-sustaining employment and help contribute to Nevada’s economic recovery.

—Brad Deeds, Adult Education Director



Looking ahead to the new GED

GED Testing Service® and adult educators throughout the country are well on their way to implementing the GED 21st Century Initiative. Its purpose is to “transform the GED test into a comprehensive program that will prepare more adult learners for postsecondary education, training, and careers.”

The Initiative includes computer-based testing (CBT), scheduled to pilot at selected Nevada sites in the fall, and a new assessment expected to launch in 2014. The winter/spring 2012 issue of Virginia’s Progress newsletter has an extensive article on the new GED, based on an interview with C.T. Turner, director of public affairs at GED Testing Service; see <http://nvae.us/6b>.

The mechanics of classroom management

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Although we work with adults, it is still amazing how many students still invest so much time trying to get around the rules. How do you enforce rules with students where the class is free and the students may not view grades as important? Here are some examples of my “favorite” students and strategies to deal with them.

The inattentive student

First, assess whether the material might be too difficult or too easy for the student. If it is just plain disinterest, reassess your seating arrangement. I always rearrange desks into workstations, with three-six seats at each station. Standard “row” seating where the teacher is in front by the board usually creates the misconception that good students sit in the front and slack students sit in the back. By creating a seating style where the front of the

class and the back of the class are more ambiguous, you can eradicate any preconceptions. Also, with workstations you can easily access the back of the room.

The underprepared students

There are often good reasons why adult students are underprepared. To discourage this, I give students pop quizzes the second and the third day of class. The process is flexible. I may allow students to use their notes or take quizzes and tests with their groups. If students continue to struggle with a quiz or a test, I usually let them take it home and redo it using additional resources to figure out mistakes. I find that our adult students sincerely want to perform well in class and there have been cases when the parents have turned to their fourth, fifth, or sixth grade child to help — a benefit to both parties! Keeping students aware that an open-note pop-quiz could be lingering around the corner is a great way to indirectly force them to stay organized and prepared. And students will notice if you go five or six days without giving a quiz!

The sycophantic flatterer

I am not going to lie; I am susceptible to this student. Who doesn't want to hear that you are the best teacher a student has ever had? Usually the compliments are sincere but some students use flattery to break the rules, most often with tardiness or absences. It is estimated that two out of three students make fraudulent excuses while in college and for every real excuse you hear, you will hear a fake one (McKeachie & Svinicki, 2010).

Use your intuition and experience to guide you. A graduate-school professor told me the best teachers tend to also be mothers. But what if the teacher, like me, is neither experienced nor feels he has developed that keen sense of mother's intuition? When I first started teaching for the [College of Southern Nevada's Adult Literacy and Language Program](#), I was immediately able to participate in a mentorship program with Noreen Tabb-Martin, a seasoned, highly qualified teacher. She taught me to look for repeated behaviors, as students are likely to repeat them until they are held accountable. I recommend that new teachers participate in a mentorship program ASAP!

A cautionary note: If you change a rule for one person then you must be willing to change the rules for everyone in the class.

In summary, I give students the benefit of the doubt because I realize that our adult students do have different priorities and challenges than traditional students. I would rather be viewed as a fool than to be seen as unfair!

See also: McKeachie, W. & Svinicki, M., 2010, *Teaching Tips: Strategies, Research, and Theory for College and University Teachers*, Wadsworth Publishing.



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DOINGWHATWORKS

research-based education practices online

The [Doing What Works \(DWW\)](http://dww.ed.gov/) Web site (<http://dww.ed.gov/>) helps educators make research-based plans and implement those plans effectively. More than just a conceptual guide, the site takes recommendations from the U.S. Department of Education's Institute of Education Sciences (IES) and translates them into tools and multimedia presentations that can be used to improve the quality of education. The Web site's content is derived from research reviews by panels of experts convened by IES and is designed to complement the *What Works Clearinghouse Practice Guides* and other IES products. It offers educators "practices in action," and while implementation examples come mainly from K-12, much can be useful to adult educators.

The Web site content includes:

- ✓ Stories, interviews, and media presentations that bring the recommended practices to life
- ✓ Examples, authentic sample materials, and links to resources that support the practices
- ✓ Downloadable tools educators can customize and adapt for use in their own settings

Topics include [How to Organize Your Teaching](#), [Adolescent Literacy](#), [Encouraging Girls in Math and Science](#), [National Math Panel: Critical Foundations for Algebra](#), [National Math Panel: Major Topics of School Algebra](#), and [Developing Effective Fractions Instruction for K-8](#).

Sponsored by the U.S. Department of Education, the Web site was developed by the Innovation Studies Program at WestEd in partnership with American Institutes for Research and RMC Research Corporation.



What works in Nevada

Visit <http://nvedu.org/studentsuccess> for recent students' stories about how Nevada Adult Education programs and teachers helped them meet their goals.